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National Parks Conservation Association • Natural Resources Defense Council
Oceana • The Ocean Conservancy • Physicians for Social Responsibility
Sierra Club • U.S. Public Interest Research Group • The Wilderness Society

March 23, 2004

**Re: Oppose fiscal year 2005 budget resolution and H.R 3973, the Spending Control Act
Deep budget cuts and unbalanced enforcement rules threaten the environment**

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of our millions of members, we urge you to oppose the fiscal year 2005 budget resolution and H.R. 3973, the Spending Control Act of 2003. These bills would not solve our nation's fiscal problems, but taken together would lock in deep and disproportionate cuts to environmental and natural resource programs for years to come.

We appreciate the critical need to increase fiscal responsibility and address our nation's growing deficit. However, we oppose attempts to use the deficit as cover for starving environmental and natural resources priorities while leaving larger federal budget problems unresolved. Unfortunately, the funding levels in the budget resolution combined with unbalanced enforcement mechanisms in H.R. 3973 would cripple these programs while failing to resolve our nation's fiscal problems. Taken together, the bills would:

Lock in crippling cuts to discretionary spending on the environment. The FY2005 budget resolution proposes deep cuts to programs that reduce pollution and protect our national treasures. Worse, H.R. 3973 would lock in these cuts through unrealistic five-year discretionary spending caps. Based on funding levels included in the House budget resolution, these caps would require Congress to cut spending on the environment and natural resources by five percent in 2005. **By 2009, the caps would require environmental spending to be cut 14 percent below current activity levels.**

Disproportionately target the environment and other priorities through unbalanced PAYGO rules. H.R. 3973 would reinstate the "pay-as-you-go" (PAYGO) requirement, but would only apply it to mandatory spending and not future tax cuts. As a result, although Congress would be forced to pay for spending increases by cutting spending in other areas, proposed tax cuts would be exempt from PAYGO. If the deficit increases as a result, it could necessitate additional cuts in environmental protection and other domestic priorities regardless of the impact on the public. This unbalanced approach to PAYGO abandons the principle of shared sacrifice needed to truly tackle the deficit.

Fail to resolve the deficit. Attempts to confront the deficit that rely primarily on painful cuts in domestic spending will be unfair and ineffective. Non-defense discretionary spending currently accounts for only 18 percent of total annual spending. Even if Congress zeroed out all \$430 billion in non-defense, domestic discretionary spending this year, it would still not eliminate our current \$521 billion deficit.

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Congress should support a balanced fiscal policy that will protect our environment and natural resources while truly addressing the deficit. Unfortunately, the FY2005 budget resolution and H.R. 3973 would together require deep and unbalanced cuts that would cripple clean water infrastructure, science and technology, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, public lands, wildlife conservation, ocean preservation and other critical priorities. We urge you to oppose both bills, and any other legislation that would lock in harmful environmental cuts through discretionary caps and other unbalanced budget enforcement changes.

Sincerely,

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